

Burn baby burn

*Balancing
your body's
'fuel' equation*

by 1st Lt. Megan A. Schafer
photo by Master Sgt. Scott Wagers

Low carb," "fat free," "high protein" — phrases like these cloak all types of food product packaging. Today's society is so concerned with what's fueling people's bodies that they forget about the other part of the equation — burning that fuel.

Does this sound familiar? No matter how many fat-free, low-calorie, sugar-substitute laden treats you consume, the results never seem to add up. Maybe you haven't balanced your calories properly.

"Calories are the fuel we need to perform," Maj. Maureen Harback said. As the deputy chief of Air Force Health Promotion Operations, she uses a simple analogy to explain the importance of calories to the human body. "I often compare our bodies to a car engine and the food we take in as the fuel."

But you can't continue to add fuel if you don't drive the car.

Each pound of fat your body stores represents 3,500 calories of unused energy. So in order to lose one pound, you either have to burn 3,500 calories or eat 3,500 calories less over a period of time.

"The ideal situation is for one to burn a significant amount of the calories that he or she intakes on a daily basis," said Scott Nunnally, Air Force Services Agency Fitness Program manager.

For most people, avoiding the office baked goods, lunchtime fast-food run, or late-night ice cream is too much temptation, so they instead choose to maintain a balance by burning off those calories. But that next step of actually hitting the gym and following through with your plan can be more difficult than expected. After all, you just want to burn calories, not become an Olympic athlete, so you must determine what workout best suits your needs.

"It depends on the individual," said Major Harback. "If the individual's primary goal is to burn fat, they want to select an activity that they can

do regularly and that burns enough calories to be worth the time commitment."

And for those that have little patience for long bouts of sweaty exercise, they may opt for exercises that provide the highest calorie burning levels so they can get in, get out and get on their way home.

To help in this crusade, we've researched and found the top 10 calorie-burning exercises. But remember, burning calories isn't just associated with the gym and those spandex shorts collecting dust in your gym bag. Calories are also burned even while doing the most mundane chores. So we've also listed the top 10 calorie-burning housework exercises. Who knows, you might start swapping biweekly lawn mowing sessions for your normal aerobics routine.

According to the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, calories used during an activity are based on experiments that measure the oxygen consumed over time for a certain body weight. These numbers are based on a 130-lb. individual exercising for 30 minutes at an average pace. The number of calories will vary as weight, time and rate are changed.

Top 10 Calorie-burning exercises

1. Boxing 354
2. Rock climbing 323
3. Rowing 312
4. Water polo 312
5. Handball 304
6. Rugby 296
7. Jump rope 294
8. Kickboxing 292
9. Jogging 292
10. Indoor skiing (machine) 280

Top 10 Calorie-burning chores

1. Rearranging furniture 195
2. Collecting recyclables 187
3. Stacking firewood 179
4. Shoveling snow 175
5. Scrubbing floors 163
6. Painting 148
7. Raking 148
8. Gardening 140
9. Mowing 140
10. Grocery shopping 105

(source: Calorie Control Council)



And don't forget ...

Major Harback and Mr. Nunnally remind Airmen of other issues to keep in mind in terms of calorie consumption and burning.

■ Though every calorie may be created equal, they do serve different purposes for your body. Be selective in consuming empty calorie foods. It's as simple as following the Food and Drug Administration food pyramid and practicing moderation, specifically with fats, sodium and sugars.

■ Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate! You learn this in basic training, it's nothing new. The importance of water hasn't changed as you progress in your individual exercises. Regular exercising causes individuals to lose water, a critical key in food digestion and other functions.

■ Eating small meals throughout the day helps increase your body's metabolic activity.

■ Examine your hereditary factors like metabolism, height, weight, diabetes and blood pressure. These can effect your calorie burning levels as well as the types of food you should or shouldn't consume.

■ Establish a fitness goal. Burning calories is always beneficial, but establishing a daily or weekly goal will help you decide what exercises you need to accomplish it.

■ Measure your fitness level. Are you at a healthy level to jog for 45 minutes straight or do you need to gradually progress to that level?

■ Don't measure your success on weight loss. Muscle weighs more than fat, so judge your progress by how your clothes fit, versus what the scale reads.

Want more info?

- Calorie Control Council
www.caloriecontrol.org
- President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports
www.fitness.gov
- Shape Your Future ... Your Weigh
www.airforce-medicine.afms.mil/shapeyourfuture